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ACCREDITED
CAMP

American Camping Association®

THE BIRCH BARK

P.O. Box 148, Waterford, Maine 04088

Winter: (207) 741-2930 Summer: (207) 583-4478

birchrock@birchrock.org www.birchrock.org

Rich Deering '73, Alumni Director • Michael Mattson '83, Camp Director

THE ALUMNI NEWSLETTER OF BIRCH ROCK CAMP

EMBRACING OURSELVES & OUR COMMUNITY

By Ben Duvall '00s



I stood along the sidewalk with my family and our friends as people on floats threw candy and Mardi Gras beads to us. My sister and I eagerly gathered all the beads and put them around our necks, stuff-

ing our pockets with candy, except for the little round rubber disks that our mothers laughingly took from us. I saw women with rainbow mohawks riding on motorcycles and men dressed in leather clothing holding whips and chains. Nothing in kindergarten or even Halloween had prepared me for my first Gay Pride parade. As I gripped the hand of my mother Jenny, I turned and asked my other mom Ann, "Who are all these people and why are they dressed up like that?" My mom knelt down and said, "Ben, they're people just like you and me, and they are dressed like that to express their feelings of who they are." I didn't understand everything she told me as I munched on a Twizzler but eventually I would.

As I grew up, the values my parents emphasized, like always being respectful of others and keeping an open mind, were echoed at the camp where I spent eight weeks of my summers. At Birch Rock, an 85-year-old boys camp in southern Maine, I learned the many slogans, camp songs, and other traditions that have shaped hundreds of other young boys into gentlemen. Many boys came to camp with their differences. I had plenty of my own. However, at camp we are taught to not make fun of people for the differences but to instead embrace them. One of my fellow counselors was a camper many years ago. He came to camp with a big afro. At camp, unlike at school, he was never teased about it, which is the reason he kept

on returning summer after summer. I'm not sure why Birch Rock is so accepting of all kinds of people, but I think it is because of the values camp teaches and the slogans we remember. As a camper, I internalized the main slogan "Help the Other Fellow" and now as a counselor, I repeat it up on the field while playing soccer and down in the lodge during breakfast. Camp has taught me that it is impossible to help other people if we continue to judge or separate them from ourselves.

As I went through the Coming of Age program at my Unitarian Universalist Church, I kept the values that my parents taught me close as I visited churches, temples, synagogues, and mosques. While keeping an open mind, I entered the many places of worship where people express their faith in their own ways. The experience opened my eyes to whole other worlds I had no idea about. I met with a mentor and we grappled together how I define what I believe. I came to a realization that the values my parents taught me had become part of my own personality and part of my own code of life. They were the way I could express my beliefs and they shaped the person I had become.

People close their minds when their essential value system is challenged. My parents raised me in a loving community and I have experienced little discrimination from others. However, soon I will venture outside my community and away from my family, where the value system my parents, my camp, and my church have helped me create, may well be challenged. When this time comes, I am confident I will have the strength to translate these words and beliefs into actions. If I end up with a roommate who has a "Marriage is between a man and a woman" poster hanging on his wall, I will remember to think back to the lady with the rainbow Mohawk riding on her motorcycle and remind myself to always keep an open mind.

Ben will be attending a university of his choice in the fall.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE ROCK

By Rich Deering
Alumni & Community Director '73 –



What makes Birch Rock a nurturing place of simplicity, civility and mutual support? For me, there are four **Rs** that are core to the Birch Rock community: **Re-ignite, Reconnect, Recognize and Rediscover.**

Birch Rock provides a safe and structured environment for boys to enjoy boyhood. The unbridled energy of boys and staff who travel from all over the country and overseas come together to kindle new friendships,

share life skills and **re-ignite** their passion for learning.

Located on pristine Lake McWain and in the foothills of the Oxford Hills region, the BRC community disconnects from electronic devices and **reconnects** to the natural world. There is no better Maine experience for a boy!

We want our campers to learn the value of giving to others, but also that it is meaningful to ask for help. **Recognizing** our strengths and limitations is critical to our path of self-discovery and overall growth. Our veteran and gifted staff cherish the opportunity to enhance one's confidence in meeting challenges and adventures.

Finally, the Birch Rock community is about the journey of **rediscovery**. We want campers to have fun and learn by listening and sharing with each other. Campers and staff make new friends, try new things and “put their heads where their feet are.”

One of the most integral parts of the Birch Rock experience is weaving the traditions and folklore of yesteryear with today's community. In this spring edition of the **Birch Bark**, we are pleased to have our graduating high school Birch Rockers (and future camper leaders) share their exclusive camp experiences with us. We hope you enjoy their unique stories, as we appreciate them freely sharing with you.

The Birch Rock Community welcomes the opportunity to hear and share your irreplaceable BRC moments. Please join us on FACEBOOK, or send us a message on email: birchrock@birchrock.org. We are looking forward to sharing the past, today and tomorrow with you!

Rich

INTO THE WOODS

By Gabe Dreyer '00s



The coffee was perking over the fire early on a cold morning in the wilderness of northern Maine. I was being evaluated for a week on advanced survival skills as a “Junior Maine Guide” candidate, and as I began to warm up, a judge emerged from his tent and asked, “What’s for breakfast?” My instructor had recommended that I cook an original and memorable meal, so I chose something unique for the woods, but also one of my favorites. I fried “matzo brei,” a Passover version of French toast. It was a hit.

Two years ago I became a “JMG,” and last summer I had the privilege of mentoring Patrick, a fifteen-year-old who tried his hand at the certification.

For the past eight summers, I have escaped to Waterford, Maine, far from the anxieties of suburban Newton, Massachusetts. At ten years old, when my parents and I found Birch Rock Camp, we had no idea how it would guide and mold me into the individual I am today. Birch Rock is a small boys camp founded on the motto, “Help the Other Fellow.” For eighty-five years, the knotty pine walls of the lodge, which are lined with plaques bearing the name of each and every camper, have seen generations of boys grow into young men—students into mentors. I am now one of them.

Aside from getting the critical summer break away from my two Jewish mothers, I found lasting role models at the all-male, anti-electronic, and rustic Birch Rock. I revered the counselors who could start a fire without a match and swim the six miles around Lake McWain. As a camper, they taught me how to introduce myself— “shake a hand, make a friend.” I learned to offer help without waiting to be asked, and to hold doors for strangers. As a counselor, I was trained to work with a team to plan and execute exciting yet safe wilderness trips, and to speak confidently and compassionately with my campers’ parents.

Last summer I supervised a cabin of twelve-year-olds as a full counselor. I took all the skills I had learned from my mentors and applied them to my new role. I taught boys to sail, to build fires, to communicate with others without using text messages, and to understand the importance of being gentlemen. I taught Patrick everything I knew about canoeing, shelter building, cooking, orienteering, axemanship, and prepared him for written woodsman skill tests. I now understand that I will always be moving between learning and teaching in my life.

Next summer, I will be returning to Birch Rock as the Junior Maine Guide instructor, ready to teach again, and excited to take a new group of boys to testing camp. This time Patrick will be by my side, helping and guiding the campers to pass, and we will be the counselors who stumble into a campsite ready to critique an early morning breakfast.

Gabe will be attending Fordham University in New York, NY this fall.

THE SWIM OF MY LIFE

By Jake Cabill '00s



I distinctly remember the final hundred yards, my arms aching from the previous two hours of non-stop freestyle. I couldn't see the mob of maroon clad campers standing on the dock, but I could sure hear their cheering. But most of all, I remember touching the dock, finishing my Whale and feeling a wave of happiness wash over me. The entire crowd of campers screaming a Birch Rock cheer for me at

the top of their lungs: “B-I-R-C-H-R-O-C-K RAH RAH RAH YEEAAHH JAKE!!!!” Wrapped in blankets, I walked through the tunnel formed by the campers to the swim tent. A moment ago my arms had felt like they were going to fall off but now I felt weightless. I was the happiest kid on the planet.

At Birch Rock Camp, there are four levels of long distance swims, the most prestigious being the Whale. It is a six-mile swim that takes the swimmer around the perimeter of the lake and is considered the greatest achievement that one can attain during his years as a camper. When I was 15, a senior camper, I began my own Whale training. On my first day of training my swim instructor, Matt, gave me a seemingly impossible task. Do as many laps to the second buoy as possible, as fast as you possibly can. At the beginning the laps came easily, but after twenty or so my body began to ache with each successive lap. If I ever tried to stop, Matt would look me in the eye and sternly say “keep going!” By the time the period was over, I had completed sixty-eight laps. Every day of Whale training would be like this, two periods of non-stop swimming, constantly pushing my limits so that when my day to swim came, I would be ready. I emerged from my training with more confidence than I ever had before.

Three years from when I completed my Whale, I am now a staff member at Birch Rock. One of my main responsibilities is training the senior campers to do their own Whales. Having completed the Whale myself, I can understand their desire to swim it. There are many goals that may fade away as kids get older, but the Whale is not one of them. It is a goal that sticks with them from the time they are 7 to the time they are 15. I, like many other campers, thought about completing my Whale constantly throughout the school year. With each successive swim, their drive to swim the Whale becomes greater and greater. As their teacher, I can push their limits in the same way that Matt pushed mine. I can help them attain a level of confidence that will stretch beyond Birch Rock. The Whale and the confidence that it brings can never be taken away. It is a gift that has benefitted me in my life and one that I want to see others reach as well.

Jake will be attending Trinity College in Hartford, CT this fall.

THE GIFT OF QUIET EXHILARATION

– by Francie Campbell, Parent Council Chair

What do Birch Rock Camp and “The Artist” —Best Picture at the Oscars this year—have in common? It's simple: they both celebrate the power of silence. The director of “The Artist” says that teenagers accustomed to ear-splitting blockbusters are thanking him for letting them experience the silence.

There is plenty of quiet to be enjoyed at Birch Rock. My son reminisces about sitting on the docks first thing in the morning, watching the mist rise off Lake McWain. He loved being surrounded by quiet buddies and counselors, and lost in the hushed beauty of the water and woods and sky.

Birch Rock Camp believes that in our boys' hectic, jangly, distracting world, silence is golden.

There are times for exuberant noise — hollering the Birch Rock cheer for a fellow camper, whooping for joy in cross-camp Capture the Flag — and there are times for quiet rest periods and wordless concentration on whittling a stick.

Camp works its magic because it is a radical break from the outside world. Birch Rockers marvel at how good it feels to leave behind computers, iPods, video games, and cell phones.

For many of us, it's hard to remember paying attention to one thing, or one person, at a time. Birch Rock gives our sons these moments of being. Out of the stillness comes creativity, personal discovery and growth.

The director of “The Artist” says he compares the silence to zero in mathematics: “People think it is nothing, but actually it's not. It can be very powerful.”

As the 2012 season approaches, keep in mind the incomparable gift of quiet exhilaration that Birch Rock offers campers. But don't keep quiet about this—we still have places for campers this summer! Encourage families to go onto www.birchrock.org, or to get in touch directly with Mike or Rich to sign up.

LIKE US ON



Birch Rock Camp

My Birch Rock Camp

By Theo Lipsky '00s



On a late June day, eight years ago, I began my first season at Birch Rock Camp. Situated in the foothills of the White Mountains, Birch Rock is in every sense a traditional boys’ summer camp. Resting on a hillside overlooking a Maine lake, its green and white cabins house roughly six campers each, along with a counselor, and the walls of its ancient lodge sport moose and elk heads, lording

with their glass eyeballs over the tables and benches below. No cell phones, no video games, no golf carts. On my very first day, at age ten, my mother and I rolled down the hill in our family’s 1986 Toyota Landcruiser. In the back of the car sat my trunk, stuffed with folded t-shirts, the Hardy Boys books, a flashlight and all the other necessities of a ten-year-old’s summer life. The ageless tradition of the camp was immediately obvious to anyone peering out of a car window. However, as I timidly stepped out of the backseat and onto the asphalt crunch of the driveway, the towering counselors greeted me with something less obvious, but as significant - that is, the camp’s principal value. See, Birch Rock’s motto is “Help the Other Fellow” - a refrain as old as the camp itself. And as the staff scrambled to help us with our trunk, to hold doors, to give directions, “Help the Other Fellow” appeared in full force. After a bittersweet farewell from my parents, “Help the Other Fellow” persisted, as these eighteen-year-old, super-hero counselors taught me how to make a hospital corner on my bed, how the daily schedule works, and later, how to shoot a basketball, how to do an Eskimo roll in a kayak, how build a birch bark fire.

Birch Rock’s rhythm pulled me in. This wasn’t about me. It wasn’t about anyone specifically; this wasn’t a camp where star athletes ruled, wasn’t a breeding ground for the rock stars of the future. To put it in modern political terms, the camp was surely, a “race to the top,” - we all tried to swim not just our “duck,” across the lake, but also our “loon” (there and back), our “seal,” several miles of the length, to get to our whale, the lake’s circumference. But it was also a “no child left behind,” effort, an effort to move every one forward - we all ate together, ran together, camped together. It was about the institution, its ideals, and serving them. The first year, I learned to Help The Other Fellow. For the next four years, I would share it.

When I worked my first year as a counselor at Birch Rock this past summer, before the campers even arrived, the camp director asked us to write on a note card why we were there - why we hung around, in a world full of summer internships, com-

munity service trips to South America, and foreign language trips to southern France. The entire staff had plenty of reasons. It couldn’t be the money, because there wasn’t much of it. Instead, we loved working with the kids, we loved the location, loved the relaxation. But I wasn’t alone in also identifying that lingering “Help the Other Fellow” principle. Since my first day as a camper, I had matured a lot. I had changed schools, grown plenty of inches, taken summers off from Birch Rock, taken AP courses, run cross country, and expanded my understanding of the world around me. The world had grown before my eyes and that world clearly needed help for the other fellow. By the end of junior year, I had decided that it was our end goal to help those around us, that our life pursuit should be to reach our maximum potential so that we might make the world a better place, lest we rob it of our best selves. I wrote on that note card that I was at Birch Rock one last summer to impart that sentiment, in whatever way I could, on my campers. I will not be returning to Birch Rock this summer, because I’d like to follow that calling and share it beyond confines of the White Mountain foothills. But I will never forget that thanks to Birch Rock, I identify myself as someone who is permanently committed, in whatever faculty, to helping the other fellow.

Theo will be attending the United States Military Academy, West Point, NY.

BOYS CAMP 2012



Our residential boys’ camp program encourages cooperation, confidence and a willingness to try new things. We challenge campers to take responsibility for their own lives and help them appreciate the needs of others in emphasizing our camp motto: HELP THE OTHER FELLOW.

The 2012 Boys’ Camp offerings are as follows:

Full Season	June 24 – August 11	48 days
First Session	June 24 – July 21	27 days
Cubs Camp I	June 24 – July 7	14 days
Cubs Camp II	July 8 – July 21	14 days
Second Session	July 22 – August 11	20 days
Cubs Camp III	July 22 – Aug 4	14 days
For more information: www.birchrock.org or (207)741-2930		

THANK YOU!

By Campaign Chair, David C. Weeks '70s

Your donation is an acknowledgment of the value of Birch Rock in character and community development. Just as we are appreciative of the “gifts” BRC has given to you, the camp is grateful for your “gift.” Your contributions and support have helped us to enhance and sustain Birch Rock’s unique summer camp experience. We graciously applaud the following 2011 Capital, Endowment, Annual, Scholarship and In-Kind gifts to the Birch Rock Camp Community.....and all the Birch Rock Parents!

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Keith & Lilo Willoughby
Peter & Amy Young

LIFE LESSONS –

By Will Alexander '00s



When I was nine years old, I nervously arrived at a summer camp, not knowing anyone or anything about the camp. Little did I know that I would learn one of the most important lessons in my life during those four weeks at camp.

“Help the Other Fellow” was the lesson. Since 1926, Birch Rock Camp has followed this motto and has been teaching boys how to help others, the core values of being a true gentleman, and how to be an all-around good person. This extremely important lesson and motto have helped make me who I am today and it is a lesson that I plan to share for the rest of my life.

As a Birch Rock counselor this past summer, it was my turn to truly share and teach the next generation of campers what I learned. Bap, a twelve-year-old boy from Paris, France, was in my cabin. It was his second summer at Birch Rock, so he knew the routine, but at times he had trouble with his English and understanding some rules. I made it my personal goal to help Bap in whatever ways I could. Nine years of French class allowed me to speak to him in French if he was confused.

QUAESITOR FUNGI

by Ben Semmes '00s

This past summer I had the privilege of co-leading the Nature program, where as a camper I had spent many favorite activity periods. The Nature hatchery served as a proper home base for many educational excursions through the pockets of woods that encircle Birch Rock. My goal, established during staff week, was to offer campers an activity in which they could completely enjoy themselves regardless of badge parts earned and not earned. I spent much of the first week trying to find the right balance of fun and information, to inspire a love for the complexities of the natural world without discouraging kids who simply wanted to catch a frog. After the first week I was confident in my teaching style and particularly proud of my younger campers, who booked the sign up sheet and supplied admirable curiosity. However, it was not until partway through the second session that adversity made these kids shine.



It had rained for two days and stopped during that night. The melancholy mist hung thick through camp as we pulled our raincoats on and gradually made our way to the weathered and treasured flagpole. Reluctantly the choice was made to host rainy day activities, although I was fixed on dragging any camper that signed up for my Nature activity through the cold and dreary outdoors. Not because all counselors are evil. I was going to show some skeptical otters how lifeless that damp dark morning was not.

One morning during clean up, I said, “Bap, don’t forget to clean up under your bed,” and he just gave me a confused look. Then I tried it French, “Bap, nettoyer sous ton lit.” Instantly he smiled and knew what I meant. It felt very satisfying, knowing that I could help Bap with something as simple as understanding a phrase. For the rest of the session, he would come to me if he had questions or concerns. It was nice to know that he trusted me and looked up to me for advice because I knew that we have formed a strong connection.

I have tried to incorporate the Birch Rock philosophy into my everyday life. For example, I am a volunteer firefighter in my town, our football team holds clinics for younger players to help them improve their skills, and I help rake leaves for senior citizens in my town through a church youth group. It is a good feeling knowing that a few simple things positively affect the lives of others in my community.

In a world that can be dominated by self-centered behavior, helping others means you are willing to give your time to assist those in need and that you are caring, compassionate, and thoughtful. This lesson means so much to me and I plan to teach this crucial value to anyone I can.

Will is attending the University of Maine Engineering College in Orono, ME this fall.

I had just received a couple mushroom field guides from my mycology-mesmerized father, and was ready to see them used. Equipped with boots, books, raincoats and “Rite in the Rain®” paper, and positive attitudes we went out with to get wet and find fungi. I couldn’t keep from feeling proud. I saw how adept a ten year old had become with a dichotomous key field guide. One boy described it as an “organic Easter egg hunt.” Stunned to see just how many species could go unseen in such a small space, we were all simply dumbfounded at the miniature phenomena. By the end of first period the six of us had identified sixteen species: red lacquered polypore and rosy gomphidious, white elfin saddle and hairy rubber cap, spongy-soft bolete and many megolopora, delicate cockscomb-crown coral and the delicacy cinnabar chanterelle, flammable tinder fungus and powder producing puffballs!

The impromptu adventure was a rousing success that sparked interests in spite of the disheartening weather. I had campers running up to me for the rest of the day beaming with excitement to tell me about the crown coral by the mountain biking shed, and the chanterelles growing beside the boathouse. It made my day to share that enthusiasm with such bright gentlemen of the Maine Woods. They gave me a truly memorable day.

PS: No fungi was consumed nor any mycelium masticated, for it is known that there are old mushroom hunters, and there are bold mushroom hunters, but there are no old bold mushroom hunters!

6 *Ben will be attending Colby College, Waterville, ME.*

MAINE WILDERNESS ADVENTURE 2012

**An extraordinary adventure and
challenge in the grand state of Maine**



Birch Rock Camp’s Maine Wilderness Adventure (MWA) program combines challenge, teamwork, and a genuine appreciation for the natural world in which we live. Most of all, this program provides a special opportunity to expand upon one’s overall camping experience and develop skills in outdoor living and survival.

The various venues explored during this 20 day exploration include: six days of backpacking and exploring the lakes and mountains of Baxter State Park before summiting spectacular Mount Katahdin, the highest peak in Maine; five days on the St. Croix River, one of the most remote waterways of the state; followed by three days and nights of kayaking among the islands and inlets of “Downeast” Maine from Cobscook base camp; and for two days of climbing at Acadia National Park to camp around the coastal hills and take a trip to the beach. The last stop is the mighty Kennebec River for a wet, wild day of laughter and screams of exhilaration as we raft through sharp turns, dramatic drops and standing waves.

The MWA Program is for boys who have completed grade 8 and have demonstrated exemplary character in their community. All applicants will be considered on a first-come basis and review of application. There is a limited enrollment of 8 boys for this outstanding adventure, so act now.

FAMILY CAMP

**Come One
Come All.....**



Birch Rock’s Family Camp provides an opportunity for families to experience a combination of recreation and fun in the Maine woods on McWain Pond. These special days are designed for families to retreat and relax themselves from the “work and school” world and rediscover their own enthusiasm for lifelong learning. Most of all, Birch Rock Family Camp is a time to enjoy!

Family Camp is a wonderful venue for all ages to enjoy camp life in group activities or just do your own thing! Each family member may sign up for daily activity offerings which are facilitated by Birch Rock’s talented staff. This program is offered from August 17 – 21 with flexible days of attendance.

**For more information on these programs,
please visit our website: www.birchrock.org or contact the
winter office @ (207) 741-2930.**

WISH LIST

BRC appreciates your contribution to the camp community. Some items we wish for are:

Industrial Weed Whacker \$300

New SunFish Sailboat \$3000

Art Supplies \$400

Nature Program Equipment

New Lacrosse Equipment – Helmets & Pads \$500

2 New Junior Mountain Bicycles \$1000

Birch Rock is a 501c3 nonprofit corporation. All donations received are tax-deductible.

Please contact us: birchrock@birchrock.org if you might be able to accommodate any of those wishes.

Thank you!

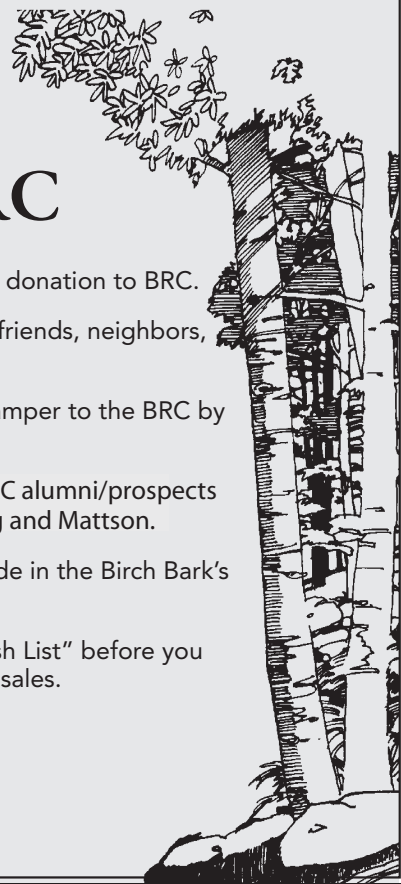
Mark Your Calendars for 2012!



Spring Clean-up Day	Saturday, May 19, 2012
BRC Summer Office Opens	Tuesday, June 4, 2012
BRC Staff Orientation	Friday, June 15, 2012
C.I.T. Orientation	Wednesday, June 20, 2012
BRC Opening 1st Session	Sunday, June 24, 2012
Cubs' Camp I	Sunday, June 24, 2012
Cubs' Camp I Ends	Saturday, July 7, 2012
Visitation Day	Sunday, July 8, 2012
Cubs' Camp II	Sunday, July 8, 2012
BRC 1st Session Ends	Saturday, July 21, 2012
Cubs' Camp II Ends	Saturday, July 21, 2012
BRC Opening 2nd Session	Sunday, July 22, 2012
Cubs' Camp III	Sunday, July 22, 2012
Maine Wilderness Adventure	Sunday, July 22, 2012
Cubs' Camp III Ends	Saturday, August 4, 2012
Alumni Day/Trustee Mtg	Saturday, August 4, 2012
BRC for Boys & MWA End	Saturday, August 11, 2012

It's Easy to Help BRC

- Send a tax-deductible donation to BRC.
- Promote BRC among friends, neighbors, family and colleagues.
- Refer a prospective camper to the BRC by phone or email.
- Host a gathering of BRC alumni/prospects with Directors Deering and Mattson.
- Send us news to include in the Birch Bark's Alumni News column.
- Ask us about our "Wish List" before you have your spring yard sales.



BIRCH ROCK CAMP

P.O. Box 148
Waterford, ME 04088

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED